

## A NOTE ON THE WEAVERS AND FINCHES OF THE PUNJAB.

BY

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As in my previous note on the Corvidæ of the Punjab published at page 157 of Vol. xxix of our Journal; my object in putting together this note on the Weavers and Finches of the Punjab has been two-fold; on the one hand the account collects together all available records to show the status and distribution of the various species; on the other it indicates directly or by implication the gaps in our knowledge and the points on which further information is necessary, and will I hope encourage the publication by our members of further records, so that in due course the history of our Punjab species may be accurately known.

As before, the Punjab, for the purposes of this note, has been taken as the area which falls within the political and administrative boundaries of the Punjab Government; but I have not hesitated to draw on records beyond those boundaries where their enumeration has helped to indicate the status of the species within my area.

The Common Baya Weaver—*Ploceus philippinus philippinus* (L.).

It is curious how incomplete is our information on this common bird.

It certainly does not occur throughout a large area of the northern and western Punjab but its exact limits are hard to define and there is also some doubt about its status.

According to Ward (Jour. B.N.H.S. xvii) it occurs in the plains of the Jammu Province; from here it stretches along the Himalayan Foothills through the Kangra Valley and Mandi State to Chandigarh below Kalka and doubtless to the Jumna River. In this area it appears to be somewhat scarce and local, only a few small colonies being found here and there. In Mandi State at Dhelu and Drang I have secured specimens as high as 4,000', but the majority do not go above 2,000'.

With the exception of a doubtful record of my own (22nd May) for Gujranwala, the most north-westerly locality for the plains proper is Lahore; here from the testimony of Dewar and Currie (Jour. B. N.H.S., xix., 627 and xxiv., 566) it is common and perhaps a resident.

From there it probably occurs throughout the whole of the Province west of the Sutlej, though details are lacking of some Districts. At any rate it is known to occur commonly at Ferozepore, Sirsa, Hissar, Ambala, Jagadhri, and Gurgaon.

As to the status of the bird there is a good deal of uncertainty. At Lahore Currie states that it is a resident breeding from June to September. At Ferozepore I found colonies breeding in July. In Hissar District including Sirsa I met with the species from May to October, breeding in June and July and apparently growing scarcer from the end of August.

In Ambala district during the winter I saw no birds about Chandigarh although the deserted nests in the trees shewed that it must be common some time in the hot weather or rains; on the Jagadhri side however some birds are certainly met with in the winter.

In the British Museum there is a specimen from Gurgaon dated 17th February. In the Kangra Valley, with the exception of the Dhelu specimen obtained on 1st June 1910 and a breeding colony at Drang on 2nd August 1922, I have only met with Weavers in October and early November. Then I found a few young still in the nests of scattered and small colonies between Chakki and Nurpur and at Thorl between Palampur and Sujampur Tehra. Nests and birds were seen about Indaura on 24th October but breeding appeared to be finished.

Further information about this bird is clearly wanted.

The Black-throated Weaver Bird—*Ploceus bengalensis* (L.).

The Catalogue of the British Museum mentions a female from Delhi (March 25th.) in the Hume collection.

Otherwise Mr. A. E. Jones is the only observer who has obtained this species in the Punjab. He first of all recorded (Jour. B.N.H.S., xxvi., 676) that he had obtained two specimens from a flock in the Ambala District. This was on 27th. February 1916 and the birds were in company with *Passer hispaneolensis*.

In the winter of 1921-1922 he again discovered the species in the Ambala District in the neighbourhood of Jagadhri. In a letter he informed me that he had found hundreds in a reed bed over water on 27th. November and 4th. December; they kept closely to the reeds and rushes, never venturing over dry land, and when disturbed scarcely topping the vegetation. They were still about as late as the 12th. March. He kindly procured a specimen for me, and allowed me to examine another in his own collection.

It is interesting to remember that this species has been found at Thall in the N.W.F. Province. Whitehead (Ibis, 1909. 226) writes:—"We have not met with this species in Kohat but Colonel Raltry records it from Thall (Jour. B.N.H.S., xii., 340), and writes as follows:—'appeared suddenly about the beginning of June in all the reed patches on the River banks; they fly about in flocks of 20 or 30 birds. On 25th. June 1898 I found a nest containing 3 eggs much incubated. There were at the same place numerous nests in various states of completion all attached to the reeds'.

Mr. Donald, the Political Officer, observed a flock in the reeds near Thall in March. Probably a resident species moving locally up and down the river."

The Striated Weaver Bird—*Ploceus manyar flaviceps* Less.

Like the last species this Weaver is exceedingly local in its distribution in the Punjab.

Currie has recorded (Jour. B xxiv. 604) that he found nests with eggs on Keishopur jheel (Gurdaspur) on the 11th. and 18th. August 1914. The nests were suspended from bull-rushes growing in water a long way from the land. I also found it very abundant at Keishopur on the 12th. September 1922 and found numerous nests, unfinished, with eggs, or with young.

Jones has obtained it not uncommonly about the neighbourhood of Jagadhri in January and February and he has kindly presented me with 3 specimens.

At Delhi it is common. Bingham writes (N. and E. 2nd. ed. Vol. II. 122):—"Breeds in numbers at Delhi in the long grass on the banks of the Jumna from July to September. In one patch of grass occupying about one hundred square yards I found on the 5th. September thirty-one nests of this bird some with full fledged young, some with fresh eggs, and others in course of constructions only". He goes on to give some details of the nidification which need not be quoted here.

The Spotted Munia—*Uroloncha punctulata punctulata* (L.).

I have found the Spotted Munia a comparatively common bird throughout the Kangra Valley from Chakki (1,200') below Nurpur to Dhelu in Mandi State, reaching a height of 4,000' along the southern base of the Outer Himalayan range (as at Dharmsala) and extending south at least as far as Ranital. It is not strictly speaking a migrant species as I have met with it at intervals throughout the year, but that it moves about locally is undoubted and there appears to be a noticeable increase in the numbers of the birds during the rains, when they breed in August and September. I saw a pair on the northern base of the Bhubu Pass in Kulu at 6,000' on 2nd July 1921.

A record of a pair of supposed *U. acuticauda* seen at Malikpur in the Gurdaspur District on 8th. August 1914 by A. J. Currie (Jour. B.N.H.S., xxiv., 604) probably refers to this species.